

## **Recruiting Myths**

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### **Showcases, camps, and clinics alone will get me recruited**

With few exceptions, college coaches go to showcases with a game plan to evaluate current prospects, not find new ones. The coaches have already identified the top tier student-athletes that will be there, and they use the showcases as a means of evaluating those specific players. If you are intent on going to showcase events, it is critical for that athlete to pinpoint schools they are interested in and find out which showcases those schools will be attending. Just showing up to any random showcase and hoping to get discovered is not a good idea. Also, realize many of these events main purpose is to generate revenue.

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### **Bad grades won't matter if your talent is good enough**

If you are one of the best athletes in the nation, then part of this statement is true. However, grades are such an important factor in the recruiting process. Grades are a huge part of financial aid, scholarship packaging, and athlete retention. Most coaches won't invest their time and money recruiting an athlete who may not be admitted into their school, or is going to fail out or become academically ineligible. If you don't have a 3.0 GPA or higher, over 50% of college programs won't be able to get you past the admissions office. Grades are becoming the single most important factor in recruiting. Admissions and administration offices are putting more pressure on athletic departments to recruit athletes that succeed once they get into school. Sure you may be 'eligible' to be recruited with poor grades, but many schools are going to recruit you.

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### **All NCAA Division I & II programs offer athletic scholarships**

While the NCAA mandates how many maximum scholarships a school can offer for a particular sport, it is up to the school whether or not they want to and can offer the number of scholarships allotted to them. Some schools choose to offer no scholarships, and many give out less than the NCAA allows.

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### **All colleges offer athletic scholarships**

Only about 50% of the colleges in each sport actually offer athletic scholarships. NCAA Division I & II colleges can offer athletic scholarships (plus Junior Colleges and some NAIA schools). NCAA Division III Programs can only offer aid based on financial need and academics. Even schools that do offer athletic scholarships often times have very limited amounts of scholarship money to be divided up amongst a large number of athletes.

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### **I can't go to an NCAA Division III School because I need an athletic scholarship**

Many NCAA DIII schools offer attractive financial aid programs and you should not overlook any school, even if they do not offer athletic scholarships. Many student-athletes go to DIII schools for free because they are good students with family need and used leverage to get the best deal. If you get a \$5,000 athletic scholarship at a \$30,000 DI or DII school you still have \$25,000 a year to pay! The amount of scholarship is not important. The bottom line price you have to pay is.

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### **NCAA Division III Schools are weaker athletically**

In some cases yes, but in many cases no. Many NCAA Division III programs have very talented athletic programs that are better than many DII's and even DI schools. They are still talented and dedicated athletes who wanted to continue their athletic career in college. If you think you can just stroll onto a DIII program you are in for a surprise. If you haven't watch a top 25 DIII game and you think this way you are making a huge mistake.

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### **Division I programs have big recruiting budgets**

Some of the larger schools with top notch football and basketball programs do have large recruiting budgets, but most do not. There are very few college coaches that have the ability to fly around the country to recruit athletes they don't already know about.

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### **You shouldn't send your profile to a school unless you know you would like to go there**

In order to give yourself as many options as possible when it comes time to pick a college, you need to send your profile to ANY school in which you may have an interest in attending. This way you can slowly narrow your list of potential choices after you gauge which schools have an interest in you. Remember, if you do not send your profile to a school, there is very little chance that they will find you.

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### **High school coaches are qualified to determine if I am college athletic material**

While many coaches are, some are not and many never played their sport in college. Many high school coaches see college recruiting through the D1 lens. The bottom line, there are many factors that determine if you can play in college and your high school coach may not know what your potential may be, or at what level.

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### **My coach handles all of the recruiting stuff for me, I don't need to worry about it**

Some coaches are very good at helping their players get the opportunity to play sports in college and have a great feel for the recruiting process and how it works. However, there are a lot of coaches who don't feel like this is a large part of their job description and don't do as much as others in terms of contacting college coaches. Whether or not your high school coach excels in this area or not, you must realize that this is YOUR life and that you and your parents have to do everything in your power to make your dreams a reality. You must send your profile to every school that you are interested in.

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### **Coaches do not like being contacted by prospective athletes**

Quite the opposite, coaches hope to hear from good athletes who are interested in their program. Some blue-chip athletes come to their attention naturally, but often there aren't enough for a coach to fill his or her roster. Many high school athletes don't want to make contact with college coaches because they are afraid the coach doesn't want to hear from them. For smaller schools, even some minor Division I schools, they need and want to hear from potential players. These schools don't have the budgets to fly around the country looking for qualified players. These schools rely on word of mouth recruiting and they also rely on some potential athletes making contact with them.

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### **College Coaches just delete mass mailings**

It really depends on the school and sport. Many college programs make sure somebody takes a look at ALL incoming profiles and they at least send an e-mail or form letter to that prospect. Still other college coaches have admitted that they do delete them or only look at a few. It's best to follow up mailings with a personal note. Many schools will respond. Some will not recruit you. That's why you need to target 100 schools, not 10.

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### **I can walk on at the school of my choice and eventually get the chance to play**

Most walk-ons end up playing Intramurals. The media glorifies the walk-ons that make it, for good reason, because few do. Coaches over-recruit because college coaching is competitive. Thousands of kids each year find themselves cut after "try-outs" that are little more than admissions tricks to raise school enrollment.

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### **College coaches only recruit top players**

Top level NCAA DI schools only do. But in some sports there are as many as 2,000 colleges to choose from. College coaches recruit anyone they think can help their program. Just because you are not the star of your team does not mean you cannot play in college. There are many players that do not excel in high school because there are other talented players at their positions or because they are a late bloomer, that end up being successful college athletes.

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### **Recruiting starts Senior year**

While some of the more aggressive parts of the process do happen when you are a Senior, those who wait to START the process as Seniors are often disappointed. It's a common occurrence to have verbal offers out and accepted for a graduating class as early as 18 months before high school graduation. In high profile sports, verbal offers are accepted as early as middle school! Regardless of the level of play, recruiting starts behind the scenes far earlier than you think or know about.

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### **Only the schools that send you letters are interested in you**

The schools that send you letters initially got your name from somewhere (colleagues, scouting services, camp list, all-conference lists, your coaches, or your personal contact). Just because you have never received a letter from a school doesn't mean they are necessarily not interested, it may just mean they don't have your information. The only way you will truly know if they have any interest or not is if you contact them so they can evaluate you as a prospect.

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### **I made All-State so coaches will be calling me**

Making an All-State or even All-Conference/Region team is a good sign as you have proven success over other high school athletes. However, there are a lot of States and Regions and far fewer colleges than high schools. Most of the athletes you are competing against for scholarships or playing opportunities have similar recognition. Coaches also have limited resources and if you don't let them know that you are interested in their school and are a good fit for what they are looking for, they are likely to miss you. The athlete who contacts coaches first and takes control of their recruiting is the one who will get the phone calls.

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### **If you receive a letter from a coach, you are being recruited**

Getting a letter from a coach is better than not getting one. However, college coaches send out thousands of letters to high school athletes they may or may not have heard of and there are probably 500 kids tearing open the same exact letter you received. Receiving a letter means a coach knows your name and knows you play the sport they coach. Respond to the letter and follow-up with the coach. Until the coach calls you, invites you to the school and makes you a formal offer to join their program, the letters don't mean too much.

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### **If you are good enough, college coaches will find you**

This is an age-old adage that is often heard throughout the recruiting process and is both out-dated and incorrect. These words are often spoken by a coach who wishes to dismiss any thoughts by the student-athlete or parent that they should market themselves to institutions by sending out their information. The fact is that this statement is true if you are one of the top 100 players in the country, have already received a great deal of accolades by your sophomore year, and most likely already have several scholarship offers in hand. This is simply not true for most student-athletes outside of the top 100. The only way they will know about you for sure is if you send them your profile and express your interest in them. Recruiting is now a global process and despite your skills or success in high school, it is extremely easy to be overlooked by college coaches who have thousands of athletes to scout and hundreds of potential venues to scout them at. College coaches don't read your local town paper and they probably don't attend your games. Only the top 1% of high school athletes are truly discovered. Your performance on the field or court will go a long way toward determining whether or not you get a scholarship offer. However, coaches are looking for more than just your ability. They are looking to find prospects that are a good fit for their school. This includes grades, character, work ethic, coach-ability, etc. If a coach is not introduced to a prospect, it's unlikely they will know about them to be able to decide whether or not to recruit them.

## **NCAA Division I**

Among the three NCAA divisions, Division I schools generally have the biggest student bodies, manage the largest athletics budgets and offer the most generous number of scholarships. Schools who are members of Division I commit to maintaining a high academic standard for student-athletes in addition to a wide range of opportunities for athletics participation.

With nearly 350 colleges and universities in its membership, Division I schools field more than 6,000 athletic teams, providing opportunities for more than 170,000 student-athletes to compete in NCAA sports each year. Division I is subdivided based on football sponsorship. Schools that participate in bowl games belong to the Football Bowl Subdivision. Those that participate in the NCAA-run football championship belong to the Football Championship Subdivision. A third group doesn't sponsor football at all. The subdivisions apply only to football; all other sports are considered simply Division I.

## **About NCAA Division II**

Division II is a collection of more than 300 NCAA colleges and universities that provide thousands of student-athletes the opportunity to compete at a high level of scholarship athletics while excelling in the classroom and fully engaging in the broader campus experience. This balance, in which student-athletes are recognized for their academic success, athletics contributions and campus/community involvement, is at the heart of the Division II philosophy.

All three NCAA divisions emphasize athletics and academic excellence for their student-athletes; after all, the NCAA's overall mission is to make athletics an integral part of the educational experience at all member schools. The differences among the divisions emerge primarily in how schools choose to fund their athletics programs and in the national attention they command.

Most Division I institutions, for example, choose to devote more financial resources to support their athletics programs, and many are able to do so because of the large media contracts Division I conferences are able to attract, mostly to showcase the publicly popular sports of football and men's basketball.

## **NCAA Division III**

More than 180,000 student-athletes at 450 institutions make up Division III, the largest NCAA division both in number of participants and number of schools. The Division III experience offers participation in a competitive athletic environment that pushes student-athletes to excel on the field and build upon their potential by tackling new challenges across campus.

Academics are the primary focus for Division III student-athletes. The division minimizes the conflicts between athletics and academics and helps student-athletes progress toward graduation through shorter practice and playing seasons and regional competition that reduces time away from academic studies. Participants are integrated on campus and treated like all other members of the student body, keeping them focused on being a student first.

# NCAA Eligibility Center

<https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>. At the top, there is a maintenance notice: "Eligibilitycenter.org will be unavailable from 9pm-12am EST on Saturday, September 23 due to site maintenance." Below this is the site's header with the NCAA Eligibility Center logo and a login form. The login form includes fields for "Student Email" and "Password", a "Login" button, and a link for "Forgot your password?". There are also links for "Help" and "High School Administrators".

The main content area is split into two columns:

- DIVISION I OR II**: This section explains that users need to be certified by the NCAA Eligibility Center to compete at an NCAA Division I or II school. It instructs users to create a Certification Account and provides a link to "Create an Account". A note states: "You need to create a Certification Account to make official visits to Divisions I and II schools or to sign a National Letter of Intent."
- DIVISION III OR UNDECIDED**: This section explains that users should create a Profile Page if they plan to compete at a Division III school or are not yet sure where they want to compete. It notes that users will receive an NCAA ID and important reminders. A link to "Create a Profile Page" is provided.

The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 12:55 PM.

## About the NAIA

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), headquartered in Kansas City, Mo., is a governing body of small athletics programs that are dedicated to character-driven intercollegiate athletics. Since 1937, the NAIA has administered programs and championships in proper balance with the overall college educational experience.

The student-athlete is the center of all NAIA experiences. Each year more than 60,000 student-athletes have the opportunity to play college sports at NAIA member institutions.

The seed of the NAIA began in 1937 with the tipoff of a men's basketball tournament in Kansas City that has become the longest running event in college basketball. Out of the tournament grew the NAIA, an association that has been an innovative leader. The NAIA was the first collegiate athletics association to invite historically black institutions into membership and the first to sponsor both men's and women's national championships. In 2000, the NAIA reaffirmed its purpose to enhance the character building aspects of sport. Through [Champions of Character](#), the NAIA seeks to create an environment in which every student-athlete, coach, official and spectator is committed to the true spirit of competition through five core values.

In 2010, the association opened the doors to the [NAIA Eligibility Center](#), where prospective student-athletes are evaluated for academic and athletic eligibility. It delivers on the NAIA's promise of integrity by leveling the playing field, guiding student-athlete success, and ensuring fair competition.

## NAIA ELIGIBILITY CENTER

<https://www.playnaia.org/>



The screenshot shows the NAIA Eligibility Center website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the "PLAYNAIA" logo on the left, and "ELIGIBILITY CENTER REGISTER | FORGOT PASSWORD" in the center. To the right of the logo are input fields for "Email" and "Password", and a red "SIGN IN" button. Below the navigation bar is a dark red banner with a home icon and the text "NAIA Eligibility Center". The main content area features the question "Do you want to play at an NAIA college or university?" followed by a sub-headline: "The NAIA requires all student-athletes who have never played a championship sport in the NAIA to have their eligibility determined before they can play." Below this is a call to action: "Get started by choosing the path for U.S. or International Students!" and a blue "REGISTER NOW" button. Underneath, there is a section titled "Get Started Here" with three columns of images and captions: "U.S. Students" (showing a group of diverse students), "International Students" (showing three students in athletic wear), and "High School Admins & Counselors" (showing a man in a blue shirt).



# 22 Essential Social Media Tips for College Sports Recruitment

by Megan Gibbs

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Coach outreach, official visits, team tryouts: you're officially in the middle of the college athletic recruitment process.

It's high stakes, exciting and terrifying. You just want things to go well, so you'll get recruited by your #1 college to play your #1 sport. It's not easy, of course—and making things even more difficult is the potential minefield of social media.

First, the good news about social media in college recruitment: you can make a stronger case for yourself by using your social media accounts strategically. The bad news? You can seriously hurt your chances if your social media presence gives athletic recruiters any cause for alarm. When it comes to social media, your choices can make or break you for a prospective coach.

So, what should you do with your social media profiles as a student-athlete hoping to get recruited by colleges? Here's a plan of attack for your Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube accounts.

## Facebook

Alright, so Facebook. If you're an average high school student, you're probably quite familiar with this site. However, you may not be familiar with its potential power to affect your reputation both positively and negatively. And to get your talents noticed by colleges, you want to use its positive potential to get the recruitment ball rolling!

Of course, Facebook doesn't take the place of coaches coming to a game to see you in action, but it definitely provides the first few steps to getting noticed and getting that connection started between you and a college.

## Facebook tips

Be visible. It's tempting to hide your Facebook profile so you don't have to worry about what you post, but you're better off staying visible and building a Facebook profile and social connections that can help you throughout the recruitment process. (Keep reading these tips to find out how!) Remember: it's not just about hiding potentially sketchy stuff—it's about highlighting all the good stuff you do too.

Become a fan. Find all your favorite college teams and school pages and become a fan and/or like 'em. This serves as yet another indicator that you're interested in the school—and stuff like that counts! Plus, you'll be in the know about what's going on with the teams, including local games you can go to.

Watch your posts. Your social media posts can bring your reputation down faster than you can say "privacy settings." The truth of the matter is, everything from wild vacation photo albums to off-color political memes have the potential to get you in trouble. You need to think before you post: "could this reflect poorly on me?" Usually, a good test is whether or not you'd be comfortable if your mom saw the post. If something doesn't pass the "mom test," untag yourself immediately, and if it's on your account, remove it entirely. Coaches aren't interested in someone who doesn't value their reputation or seems like they wouldn't positively represent the team off the field. There are hundreds of other student-athletes out there who might be just as talented as you. And when it comes down to it, coaches will choose the athlete with the clean profile over someone who doesn't follow the NCAA rules or who doesn't value their online image as a high school student.

Watch your comments. If you're commenting on a school or athletic department's page, be nice. No profanity or anything that is going to draw negative attention to you. Coaches, recruiters, and even admission officials watch comments, and if you're drumming up drama and negative attention, no coach is gonna want you, never mind the college! Keep it clean on your own profile page too.

Promote yourself. You never know who is looking at your public Facebook profile. So, in case you aren't doing this already, fill it up with all the cool, impressive things you're doing! Post pictures and videos of your best games or plays. Join groups that involve your favorite school/sport/coach and post there as well. "Like" and fan the things you're interested in. Take pride in yourself and the schools and teams that you love.

Be active. Who do you remember most on Facebook? It's the people who update make an impression on everyone. So get some attention and like teams' and schools' pages. Comment on their status updates. Show your interest in them—and they just might show interest in you.

## **Twitter**

Here's the thing about Twitter for student athletes: the NCAA is extremely strict about the recruiting process, and to be honest, coaches will not be using Twitter to recruit you. But that doesn't mean you can't use Twitter to get your name out there. In fact, it can give you that recruitment edge you've been looking for. Twitter also allows you to make connections faster than anything else out there and is an incredible tool to help you create your online social media presence.

### Twitter tips

Connect with coaches. For starters, just follow the coaches of your favorite colleges and follow the colleges themselves. The coach probably won't follow you back, but don't worry—this can still get you noticed. You'll be in their followers list and they get an e-mail saying that you are now following them.

Actually tweet. Nothing is easier for getting attention than a simple tweet. Again, just because a recruiter or coach can't tweet you back doesn't mean they won't find you in when they research you. And you want them to find the videos and articles you're sharing on your Twitter feed! You don't have to be fancy; all you need is



something like: “Hey @coach check out the Boston Globe article about my team! <http://bit.url> #team #volleyball #athlete #schoolname.”

Engage with the admission office. On top of making sure you tweet consistently, get your name out to the college’s admission office through direct messages (DMs) and tell them that you’re interested, or ask questions about admission or the athletics departments. Don’t spam them, though. No one likes a spammer.

Use hashtags. You already know the deal with hashtags: putting this little guy # in front of a word (with no spaces) automatically creates a link to all the other tweets in the world with that word in them. If a coach wants to click on the #basketball link, your tweet (depending on when you tweet it) will pop up in the tweet history.

Help get a conversation going. So let’s say you and a coach meet and the athletic recruiting process is underway. Show them you’ve done your homework about their team and the sport in general. If there’s a moment to just talk freely, mention what you’ve seen from them and/or their team/college on Twitter. This shows initiative and excitement about possibly playing for the team. You’re already a fan!

Watch your mouth (again!). Let’s just say from here on out anytime you’re posting on a social media site, be nice and courteous. As with Facebook, profanity and negative comments on Twitter are frowned upon and don’t get you any points with anyone. What you post is a reflection of you. If you have a bad attitude or are constantly unloading buckets of drama, coaches and schools are most likely going to pass on recruiting you.

Remember: once it’s out there, it’s out there. Say you have a tweet-happy friend who just looooooves to tweet to you with pictures or videos that don’t exactly put you in the best light. After they tweet it, it is out in the world to read. What happens if a coach just happens to be looking at your Twitter page? What happens if they click on that link? You might find the tweet 10 seconds after they clicked on it and then delete it, but it won’t make a difference. Make sure you get all your friends on the same page to keep their pictures and videos to themselves before posting your crazy shenanigans for the world to see.

## **YouTube**

Ah, YouTube. It’s not just for falling down a hole of funny videos when you’re trying to sleep anymore. YouTube is the place to finally put your social media talent—not to mention athletic talent—on display. So let’s sharpen your skills. Here’s what you should be doing to get the most out of your YouTube account during college athletic recruitment.

### YouTube tips

Upload. Upload. Upload. Did I mention upload? This is one site where you can upload as many videos as you want, and you should! Don’t worry, you’re not making a movie here; even those five-second clips of you scoring the winning goal or making that amazing play are worth posting. Upload anything that will highlight your skills and demonstrate to any coach why they need you for their team.

Spread the word. Just because you post a few videos online doesn’t mean a college coach is going to magically pop onto your YouTube page, watch them, and recruit you. This is where the Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube worlds collide. Tweet to coaches with the YouTube link. Post the link as a status update on Facebook. If you’re a member of an athletic recruiting site and you are able to post or save video clips, add your video there as well. Whatever you can do to spread the word that you’re out there and this is what you do. You can post on Twitter and Facebook all day long, but it’s not until a coach or recruiter can actually see you play that you really grab their interest. And remember: the more views you get, the better. You never know when a video might go viral!

Be active. Uploading videos is only part of YouTube-ing. You have to be an active user to get your username/account into the athletic world. Any comment you leave on another video will link to your account.

So if you're leaving positive, encouraging, and intelligent comments, and a coach or recruiter happens to be viewing the same video, there is a possibility that they could be intrigued by you and click into your account.

Fill in the details. Make sure your video is as complete as possible. Get the description down: What position are you playing? What game is it? What was the score? How much time was left? Details like that demonstrate that you put a little time into the posting, and it ultimately helps anyone who is watching the videos to understand what was going on. Using a descriptive title is also important because it allows the video to be found more easily.

Show your off-the-field side. YouTube is great for highlighting your athletic skills, obviously, but what about off-the-field you? This may sound weird in the case of athletic recruitment, but hear me out. A coach and a school don't just want the best athlete; they want the best overall student. You're not just representing the athletic department but the college as well. You can write until you're blue in the face about how great you are at coaching little league, working on community service, or tutoring your neighbor—but why write when you can show? Grab a video camera and have someone tape you coaching your team or working on a community service project. Do a little Q&A about why you love working with children or helping the less fortunate. Show anyone viewing your videos what type of person you are. In the moments of watching that video, you become way more personable than just an athlete on the field. A coach can get to know you before even meeting you, which can really work in your favor in the long run.

Be realistic. The one thing you cannot do is rely on YouTube alone to get recruited. YouTube is only a stepping stone to making the sports recruitment process a little easier. It is likely that you will have to send materials in to some coaches depending on how they recruit. So don't just think you're done once you upload a few videos.

Watch what you post. After all the warnings above, you saw this one coming, didn't you. Just like with Facebook and Twitter, you have to keep your YouTube tame. Even though you've created your own YouTube account, you're allowing the world to see into your life. You might just post one awesome video of your track meet last week, but that also links to your other videos of anything else you've posted. Don't let coaches see crazy antics you may have been up to. It's not worth losing a recruiter's respect.

Choose a chill username. Seriously, what is up with those crazy usernames? Please for all that is good in this world, just be normal with the username. Here are some questions to help you out: What is your name? What sport do you play? How old are you? Easy: megansoccer17. BINGO. Keep it short, sweet, and classy, people.

Don't feel pressured to be too fancy. There are a lot of people out there who have great video-editing skills they can show off on their YouTube pages. But, in this case, you don't need a lot of frills. After all, you're not trying to get recruited for best video editing! Just post the video as is or with a little bit of editing to get to the good parts. (You don't need to post a video of your teammate running the ball down the court when you aren't even in the clip for another 10 minutes. You just want to post the best videos about you.)

YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, when used appropriately, can really boost your position in the recruitment world. As long as you follow these tips, you'll be fine. Just remember that social media is by no means the end-all-be-all of college athletic recruitment. They are all just stepping stones to your path to the top!